

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-17 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 7 and 9 are independent.

The Specification has been amended to provide cross-reference to the priority applications.

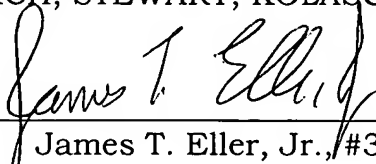
**Conclusion**

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Mr. James T. Eller, Jr. (Reg. No. 39,538) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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By   
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JTE/clb  
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